**Problem:** What do college students eat, and why are these students choosing healthy or unhealthy meals?

**Method:** To answer this question I used a few ethnographic methods. I interviewed a variety of college students including: boys and girls, students with different majors, students with different health needs, and students with varying schedules. I also observed different dining locations such as the Husky Lounge and Scranton Commons to see what options students chose. Lastly, I collected time diaries which indicate how often students eat.

**Background**

The work of an ethnographer is by no means easy. Ethnographer’s need to be thorough and reliable while at the same time completely divulging themselves into their work. This was a point that completely stood out to me as I read, “Ethnography Approaches to Language and Literacy Research” by Shirley Brice Heath and Brian V. Street. While I read the first three chapters of “Ethnography,” I began to understand just what it means to be an ethnographer. An ethnographer is someone picks a topic of interest that poses a question or a problem. After an ethnographer has this question or problem, he or she begins to explore the topic and dive into research. They lead interviews while asking questions of: who, what, when, why, and how to uncover truths behind situations. They also observe locations and take pictures that can later be analyzed. Ethnography can be a long process with many difficulties but in the end it can produce reliable and valid answers to the question at hand.

As I began my own quest as an ethnographer, I took what I learned from this book and applied it to my own project. I reflected back on what I read as I went through the steps that an Ethnographer must go through. I lead interviews, and observed dining locations while keeping my keeping my question in mind. In the end, just like the ethnographers in this book, I came to what I believed to what I believe is a reliable conclusion based on solid evidence.

As I began my project, I also took into consideration some myths that go along with what choices students should make when they eat. A possible consideration could be that stress causes students to eat significantly more, or that crazy schedules make it difficult for students to find appropriate times to eat. I also had the assumption that maybe the access that college students have to junk food at school may make those choices more appealing. It was my goal as I became an ethnographer to discover if these truly were the reasons behind what students eat or if maybe there was a different reason.

**Here are my interviews: If you look at my trifold I have other writing on there, like charts, these interviews are in response to the charts.**

**Interview 1**

**Why do you choose to eat healthy?**

As a child she was super over weight because her mom was busy and would tell her to go get a snack. She was responsible for feeding herself and so she made unhealthy choices. In elementary school she found her name passed around on a “fat list.” Because of this she then began to play Dance Dance Revolution every day, all day. When 5th grade came she had a growth spurt and grew 3 and a half inches. Eventually her weight evened out. She learned in high school how to eat right and work out right. Now being an overweight child is something that she can laugh about. Her boyfriend was an overweight child too and they refer to themselves as CHF (childhood fatty) to be funny. She even wrote about how being an overweight child affected her as her college entrance essay. Today she is confident, but it was difficult as a child.

After interviewing this student on how she eats, I came to a few conclusions. First, I think that this interview proves that students all have different reasons for what they eat[[1]](#endnote-2). This girl was an overweight child, and it still impacts her life to this day. She works hard to maintain a healthy weight; however, she realizes that she still wants to enjoy life, so she chooses to indulge in sweets when she is in the mood to[[2]](#endnote-3). Something else that was interesting about this student was that she is now a very lean girl. This showed me that I cannot assume that thin people are or aren’t healthy. Just because a person looks a certain way now, doesn’t always mean that they eat the best or that they even always looked that way[[3]](#endnote-4).

1. Introduction [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Insert [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Interpret [↑](#endnote-ref-4)